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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Secretary-General voices increasing concern at violence and political instability in Burundi; Special Adviser says situation is laboratory for preventive action.
- + Thorvald Stoltenberg to undertake urgent mission to Belgrade and Pale to discuss Contact Group initiative with Serb leadership; Secretary-General says time has come for acceptance of proposals.
- + Special Representative Khan proposes Rwanda Emergency Normalization Plan, including grant or soft loan to enable Government to function; UNAMIR prepares for smooth transition when French-led force leaves protected zone.
- + High Commissioner for Human Rights to begin visit to Rwanda and Burundi on 17 August; will ensure that mandates of Special Rapporteur and Commission of Experts are properly implemented.
- + Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination demands immediate end to suffering of Rwandan people; citing inadequate international response, says genocide could have been prevented.
- + Sarajevo airport closed after two relief flights hit by small arms fire; calm prevails elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina despite expiration of 8 June Agreement.
- + Argentina says terrorist acts should not go unpunished because of laws on diplomatic immunity; advocates United Nations mechanism for prompt international action when States are affected by terrorism.
- + Somalia cholera epidemic continues to abate despite sporadic cases in north-west and north-east; UNDP expert to review rehabilitation programmes in country.

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Special Adviser Alvaro de Soto today said that Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was growing increasingly concerned at developments in Burundi. He told correspondents at Headquarters that the political situation there was critical, while the refugee situation gave cause for alarm. Negotiations on presidential succession remained deadlocked, and security had deteriorated since July. More than 200 people had been killed in recent violence.

Special Representative Ahmedou Ould Abdallah was in constant contact with the interim President and other political leaders in Burundi and was monitoring developments closely, Mr. de Soto continued. Meanwhile, Senior Adviser Chinmaya Gharekhan was briefing the Security Council on steps being considered to ensure that a volatile situation did not explode. He described the situation in Burundi as "a laboratory for some sort of preventive action," coming so soon after the tragedy in neighbouring Rwanda.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has asked Thorvald Stoltenberg, the Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, to undertake an urgent mission to Belgrade and Pale, Special Adviser Alvaro de Soto announced today. Mr. Stoltenberg will meet with the Serb leadership to discuss the recent proposals by the Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia -- France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States -- and the reception they had received.

Mr. de Soto said the Secretary-General believed that the time had come to try to ensure that the Contact Group's proposals were accepted. Accordingly, Mr. Stoltenberg would be arriving in the area no later than 14 August.

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The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Rwanda, Shahryar Khan, has proposed a "Rwanda Emergency Normalization Plan", including a grant or soft loan to enable the Government to function. The plan provides for the immediate restoration of power and water supplies and telecommunications, the harvesting of crops and the reopening of hospitals. Operations to be concluded by October include the training of a police force, the opening of a central bank, the training of administrators and the repair of infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) has been making preparations for a smooth transition in the humanitarian zone in the southwest of the country when the French-led international force departs later this month. UNAMIR and the United Nations Rwanda Emergency Office have been setting up joint offices at Gikongoro and Cyangugu, and the Mission has been arranging for meetings between local leaders and Government officials. United Nations military observers have also been conducting joint patrols with the French and African units in the zone.

Those efforts were intended as confidence-building measures to avert a massive outflow of refugees when the French-led force left, the spokesman continued. He noted that there had been a significant amount of propaganda in

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the area claiming that people would no longer be safe when Operation Turquoise had concluded.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, will begin a visit to Rwanda and Burundi on 17 August, according to a spokesman for the Organization. Mr. Ayala Lasso will meet with authorities to discuss the modalities and conditions of work for the human rights field operation, to ensure that the mandates of the Special Rapporteur and the Commission of Experts are being properly implemented.

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The Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities has demanded an immediate end to the suffering of the Rwandan people. In a resolution adopted in Geneva on Tuesday, the Subcommission referred to the "tardy and insufficiently effective intervention" by the international community. It stated that a more successful response might have made it possible to prevent the genocide.

The Subcommission also called for the quick and safe return of refugees. It stressed that an international effort was needed to bring war criminals to trial and disarm the militias and extremists of the former Rwandan forces. It recommended that Rwanda be given assistance for its reconstruction and to establish a State governed by the rule of law.

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Sarajevo airport was closed today after two relief aircraft were hit by small arms fire, according to a United Nations spokesman. The airport had received 13 of the 15 flights scheduled for the day. A United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) helicopter was hit by machine-gun fire yesterday, but did not sustain casualties or serious damage.

There was relative calm elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina today, apart from fighting between Bosnian Government forces and a breakaway Muslim faction in the Bihac pocket. The spokesman noted that the Agreement between the Government and the Bosnian Serbs to refrain from offensive activities, which had been signed in Geneva on 8 June and later extended for one month, had expired yesterday.

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Argentina has said that it is necessary to rethink the norms governing the immunity of diplomats and the inviolability of their headquarters because of a sharp rise in international terrorism. In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General dated 9 August, Argentina said illicit acts carried out under the protection of diplomatic immunity should not go unpunished, as that would be contrary to the spirit and letter of the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations. Diplomatic law should be updated to prevent situations

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in which grave international crimes, such as terrorism and drug-trafficking, took place under its protection. The letter was written in response to the terrorist bombing in Buenos Aires on 18 July.

Argentina said it was necessary to consider ways in which the United Nations could contribute to the protection of affected States. It suggested the creation of a mechanism for immediate international action when a country was affected by serious crimes, which would automatically generate an "international case," thus preventing them from going unpunished because of strict application of the Vienna Convention. Such a mechanism would have a base in Article 41 of the Convention, which dealt with the incompatible uses of diplomatic immunity and inviolability of headquarters.

Sheltering terrorists or persons strongly suspected of crimes was incompatible with the inviolability of diplomatic premises, Argentina stressed. Legal opinions concerning such persons should be examined urgently, with a view to incorporating them in the Vienna Convention. United Nations action to combat terrorism should be as intense as the action taken to combat other serious international crimes. The Security Council should make recommendations to Member States on ways to deal with the problem, as success could only be ensured by the concerted efforts of all States.

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The cholera epidemic in Somalia continues to show signs of abating, and has run its course in many places, a spokesman for the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) announced today. However, some cases of the disease were still being reported in the north-west and north-east of the country, and the World Health Organization (WHO) was strengthening its water and sanitary campaign there.

Meanwhile, a disaster expert from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will arrive in Mogadishu later this month to begin a study of the problems of displaced persons and returnees. He will also review UNDP's rehabilitation programmes in Somalia.

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